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IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE

Bureau of Community and Environmental Health

What is the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)?

ATSDR, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the principal federal public health agency involved with hazardous waste issues. The agency is responsible for preventing or reducing the harmful effects of exposure to toxic chemicals in the environment on human health and quality of life. It is responsible for determining, as best as possible, whether people experience adverse health effects from their exposure to environmental pollutants. ATSDR's staff of approximately 400 includes epidemiologists, physicians, toxicologists, engineers, health assessors, public health educators, and support staff.

What does ATSDR do?

ATSDR helps to prevent or reduce the harmful health effects of exposure to hazardous substances through a variety of activities. ATSDR advises the Environmental Protection Agency, other federal and state agencies, community members, and other interested parties on the health impacts of contaminated sites and toxic spills. ATSDR identifies communities where people might be exposed to hazardous substances in the environment. The agency also determines how hazardous a site is and recommends actions that need to be taken to safeguard people's health. It does this by issuing public health advisories and conducting public health assessments and health consultations. ATSDR also keeps a national registry of people exposed to specific toxic chemicals in the environment. Additionally, the agency summarizes and publishes information about the health effects of hazardous materials and conducts research in toxicology and health effects of environmental pollutants.

ATSDR conducts studies in some communities at or near hazardous waste sites and toxic spills to determine if people's health have been affected by their exposure to toxic materials. ATSDR also funds research conducted by universities, state agencies, and others who study the relationship between exposure to hazardous substances and disease.

For Additional Information

For additional information about ATSDR, hazardous wastes, and toxic substances in the environment:

Call Toll Free 1-888-422-8737 or visit ATSDR online at: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov>

What is the Bureau of Community and Environmental Health (BCEH) Environmental Health Education and Assessment Program?

BCEH is located within the Idaho Division of Health, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and is one of the principal state health agencies involved with hazardous waste issues in Idaho. The Environmental Health Education and Assessment Program is responsible for assessing human health risks associated with exposure to toxic substances in Idaho's environment and informing and educating Idahoans about the identified health risks and ways to prevent or reduce exposure. The Program works with federal, tribal, state, and local health and environmental agencies and communities to assess the health impacts of toxic chemicals throughout Idaho. The Program's staff consists of a program manager, a toxicologist, a health educator, and support staff.

What Does the Environmental Health Education and Assessment Program do?

The Program operates under a cooperative agreement with ATSDR and collaborates with the agency on all site-related activities. The Program focuses primarily on hazardous waste sites in Idaho which have been designated as Superfund sites.

The three main activities of the Program include conducting public health assessment-related activities, encouraging community involvement, and conducting health education activities.

The Program conducts health consultations and health assessments for communities located near contaminated sites. It seeks to involve community members in planning, implementing, promoting, and evaluating environmental health education activities in order to protect public health. The Program also strives to increase knowledge among health care providers regarding the health effects of exposure to toxic substances at hazardous materials sites, clinical diagnostic tools, recommended treatments, and ways to prevent or mitigate exposure to toxic chemicals.

For Additional Information:

For additional information about the Bureau, hazardous wastes, and toxic substances, contact:

Bureau of Community and Environmental Health (BCEH)

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